California Department of Education
Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

HIGH SCHOOL!

A Periodical for California's High School Educators

Spring 2006

Theme

Small Learning Communities

Inside this issue:

A Message from the Superintendent

In the business arena and the world of politics, we hear over and over again that "it's all about relationships." That adage can certainly be applied to the field of education. The multitude and complexity of relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and parents form impressions on students that can last a lifetime.

Although relationships are significant throughout the educational life of students, it is during adolescence that they experience a heightened need for close connections with adults. During this same period of time, most of these students are entering the larger, more socially complex world of high school.

Recent and emerging research confirms what many already know—that close relationships with teachers are critical to academic success for high school students. One of the key components of my High Performing High School Initiative—Nurturing and Developing a Community of Support for High Achieving Students—promotes stakeholders assisting high schools in implementing innovation programs and approaches, such as smaller learning communities, thematic and magnet schools, flexible scheduling, and expanded service-learning and community service programs. Promotion of these innovations is reflected in two types of programs overseen by the CDE—Specialized Secondary Programs and California Partnership Academies. Both have had positive impacts on student performance.

High schools throughout California and the nation are creating student-centered learning environments that respond to the intellectual, social, and psychological needs of adolescents. Approaches being adopted by high schools include the formation of smaller learning communities. These consist of grade-level, content-area, and interdisciplinary teams, as well as smaller "schools within schools" and career academies focused on engaging students, personalizing their learning, and promoting strong relationships with teachers, who are seen as adult mentors.

The CDE salutes the 2005 Distinguished High Schools who have identified smaller learning communities as one of their best practices. Two high schools featured in this issue—both California Distinguished High Schools—demonstrate how smaller learning communities are succeeding in personalizing learning and preparing students for success in postsecondary career paths. Their strategies and approaches are excellent examples of education at its best. Not only are they promoting student academic success, but these schools are helping to nurture their students to become responsible and productive members of society. And they are doing it by affirming that it is, indeed, "all about relationships."

JACK O'CONNELL

About This Issue

Welcome to the spring 2006 edition of *High School!* The theme of this edition is "smaller learning communities" and the ways in which they foster positive school relationships for students, promote academic achievement, and prepare students for successful postsecondary careers.

The high school years are a critical period in the development of students. The academic, social, emotional, and ethical values shaped during these years will carry into adulthood and have lifelong effects. With teams and smaller learning communities, high schools are being transformed from confusing, sometimes frightening, and impersonal places to environments where students feel safe, cared about, and deeply connected to others.

Creating smaller learning communities or conversion is one of the redesign tools that many California high schools are utilizing to provide personalized learning environments directed at improving student academic achievement and career success. There are many types of smaller learning communities: career pathway academies, California Partnership Academies, grade-level "houses," and schools-within-schools, each with a special theme or focus.

The California Department of Education (CDE) plays a critical role in overseeing the funding for and monitoring of 290 Partnership Academy model schools throughout California. These model schools address grades 10 through 12 and are structured in a school-within-a-school format. The academies incorporate many of the elements of the high school reform movement by creating small family-like environments, integrating academic and career technical education, and fostering important partnerships with businesses. Academy programs emphasize student achievement and successful postsecondary results. Annual evaluations of these programs consistently reflect improved student attendance, number of credits taken, grade point averages, and graduation rates.

The CDE also oversees Specialized Secondary Programs (SSP), which provide students with advanced learning opportunities in subjects such as English–language arts, mathematics, science, history and social science, foreign language, and the visual and performing arts. These programs emphasize the acquisition of technology skills and the use of technology as a tool for instruction and learning. Successful schools with these programs have (1) 80 percent of participating students pursuing either postsecondary education or additional professional training in their fields of study after graduation from high school, and (2) 80 percent of students who remain in the program complete their high school education.

In addition to the above mentioned programs, 19 of the 2005 California Distinguished High Schools have identified smaller learning communities as one of their best practices.

The lead article, "Some Big Ideas About Smaller Learning Communities," is written by Rose Owens-West, Senior Project Director at WestEd. Dr. Owens-West also acts as director of the Regional Smaller Learning Communities Technical Assistance Center serving California, Nevada, and Arizona. Dr. Owens-West has worked extensively with the CDE on technical assistance projects related to the implementation of Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act for major California school districts such as San Francisco and Los Angeles as well as for rural districts in the northernmost part of the state. The article, which discusses common smaller learning community configurations and key ideas for effective implementation, is based on her work and research on smaller learning community programs.

(continued on page 3)

This edition also highlights practices at two California Distinguished High Schools. Chico High School has seven distinct smaller learning communities giving students strong academic and technical skills in a family-like environment within a large high school setting. In contrast, Anzar High School is intentionally small. Students work closely with the same adviser (the student-to-teacher ratios is 20:1) for their entire four years while focusing their efforts on service learning and graduation by exhibition.

“Technology as a Tool to Save Time, Promote Professional Development, and Build Community” features the Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL), an education portal that is one of the four educational technology services provided free by the CDE. Administrators will be especially interested in the site’s matrix that contains relevant, administrator-reviewed and selected resources. If you want information about funding for technology, professional development for digital school leadership, or easily accessible resources related to a variety of topics such as data-driven decision making, No Child Left Behind, or technology planning – this is the site for you!

The article on counseling provides a preview of the new *California Results-Based School Counseling and Student Support Guidelines,* which has a developmental design and focus on prevention. These guidelines, to be published in fall 2006, reflect a paradigm shift from the traditional service-oriented approach. Find out how these guidelines support the professional school counselor’s role in smaller learning communities.

Last, the “Worth a Click” page supports this edition’s theme by providing links to relevant and focused sites. There’s no need to search further to find Web sites that provide information about implementation assistance for smaller learning communities!

Some Big Ideas About Smaller Learning Communities

Today, any discussion of improving middle and high schools includes references to smaller learning communities (SLCs). The traditional large, comprehensive high school, often referred to as the "factory-model" school, is considered by many to be outdated and ineffective. [1] Implementing SLCs is one strategy for addressing the issues of fragmentation, limited teacher collaboration, and lack of focus that characterize traditional schools, whether they be high schools or middle schools.[2]

What, then, is a smaller learning community? Although there are many models of implementing SLCs, the distinctions among them are frequently unclear because their variety is as individual as the districts and schools in which they are housed. The definitions of small learning communities range from units that supplement a school's departments to those that are entirely separate schools sharing a common physical location.[3] Kathleen Cotton synthesized the literature on smaller learning communities and provided the following definition. Generally, a SLC is any separately defined, individualized learning unit within a larger school setting. Students and teachers are scheduled together and frequently share a specific location within the school. Common SLC configurations found in both high schools and middle schools include the following:[4]

In small learning communities, students and teachers frequently share a specific location within the school.

- House Plans
    - Students and teachers are assigned to smaller groups.
    - Students share courses and teachers.
    - Students are usually organized by grade level.
    - Sometimes groups are organized vertically with two or more grade levels.
- Career Academies
    - The focus is on a broad occupational area.
    - Teachers and students choose to be members.
    - Schools may choose both school-based and work-based learning experiences.
- Pathways, Pods, or Cluster
    - Sequenced career-related and academic courses toward graduation are provided.
    - Students are sometimes scheduled together.
    - Teachers form a team for interdisciplinary instruction.

(continued on page 5)

[1] Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Factory-Model Schools*. School Redesign Network. *http://www.schoolredesign.net/srn/server.php?idx=242/* (accessed June 29, 2005).
[2] *Taking Center Stage.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, Chapter 7.
[3] Raywid, M. A. "Taking Stock: The Movement to Create Mini-schools, Schools-within-Schools, and Separate Small Schools." New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1996.
[4] Cotton, Kathleen. *New Small Learning Communities: Findings from Recent Literature*. Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001.

- Career Clusters or Pathways

    - The focus is on broad-based industry areas from technical to professional levels.
    - The work focus is integrated with a focus on high academic skills.
    - Students are organized according to career goals and interests.

- Advisories
    - The focus is on the social, emotional, and intellectual development of students.
    - Teachers provide students with continuous adult guidance and support with their peer group.

In addition to these configurations, there are the various "school" structures: the school-within-a-school, autonomous small school, mini-school, charter, magnet, alternative, multiplex, and theme-based school. The distinctions among these various structures include their mission, instructional focus, admissions policies, physical location, and relationship, if any, to a larger school.[5]

". . . it is critical to establish that size and structure alone do not provide a magical solution for improving middle and high schools."

A discussion of SLCs, by definition, starts with a focus on size and structure. However, it is critical to establish that size and structure alone do not provide a magical solution for improving middle and high school levels. Successful school transformation into SLCs should begin with the acknowledgment that small size alone does not automatically yield success. "What small size does is to provide an optimal setting for high-quality schooling to take place. It facilitates the use of organizational arrangements and instructional methods that lead to a more positive school climate and higher student learning."[6]

Key Ideas

There are key ideas that need to be emphasized regarding effective implementation of SLCs. For the past 30 years, researchers have developed literature describing the characteristics of schools that successfully undertake comprehensive school reform. Twenty-five years of research have been conducted on the efficacy of small schools and SLCs. From studies of schools undergoing reform, we now understand what schools need to do and have in place in order to implement significant and lasting change.

The first key idea is that effective schools and SLCs have, as their foundation, a focus on teaching and learning. To be effective, the SLC must improve student achievement. The primary impetus for conversion must be to increase the academic performance of *all* students, not simply create new learning environments.

The second key idea about effective implementation of SLCs is that certain conditions must exist within the school before the transformation can take place. Linda Darling-Hammond, in her work with high school redesign, identified the following characteristics as necessary for high schools wanting to convert into SLCs:[7]

- A focus on student achievement
- A culture of collaboration
- The engagement of all stakeholders
- The willingness of the staff to change
- The skill of the leaders in the school
- The staff's knowledge and use of data-driven decision making

(continued on page 6)

[5] Ibid.

[6] Cotton, Kathleen. *New Small Learning Communities: Findings from Recent Literature*. Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001, p. 17.

[7] Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Factory-Model Schools*. School Redesign Network. *http://www.schoolredesign.net/srn/server.php?idx=242/* (accessed June 29, 2005).

These fundamental characteristics translate into a school's shared vision, willingness, and capacity to change.[8] In WestEd's work with SLCs, we discovered that schools with those characteristics as preexisting conditions more effectively implement their SLCs. They were better able to envision a different type of school for themselves and their students, to agree on the goal of high academic achievement for all students, and to transform the school. Moreover, they already had a common understanding of what it would take to meet that goal and were well established in working collaboratively.

The last key idea to be addressed in this article is that schools transforming into SLCs must reorder their priorities and reallocate their resources to support the SLCs. Reordering priorities means staff must make decisions to change the depth and breadth of the curriculum, reduce their extracurricular offerings, and use their time differently. They also examine and revise their priorities about staff roles and responsibilities, redefining the jobs of administrators and teachers. We have seen that in successful SLCs, staff members rethink and reallocate all of their available resources to support their changed priorities. In sum, SLC implementation requires reallocating resources to:

- Allow flexible student grouping and scheduling to meet students' needs.
- Offer varied blocks of instructional time to improve teaching and learning.
- Effectively utilize common planning time.
- Provide time for professional development time.

"We have seen that in successful SLCs, staff members rethink and reallocate all of their available resources to support their changed priorities."

In conclusion, what constitutes success for implementing SLCs cannot be separated from what constitutes success for middle and high schools. Successful transformation into SLCs means conducting the business of schooling for adolescent learners differently.

Photo credit: Photo of McClatchy High School, Sacramento, California; photo taken from school's Web site.

By Rose Owens-West

Rose Owens-West is the director of the Regional Smaller Learning Communities Technical Assistance Center, WestEd.

[8] Berman, Paul, and others. *Readiness of Low-Performing Schools for Comprehensive Reform.* Emeryville, Calif.: RPP International, 2000.

Anzar High School
Achieving Student Success Through Schoolwide Collaboration

Anzar High School
San Benito County
Aromas/San Juan Unified School District
2000 San Juan Bautista Highway
San Juan Bautista, California 95045
Charlene McKowen, Principal
Phone: (831) 623-7660
2005 School Profile

Community: Rural (Small City)
Grade Levels: 9-12
Enrollment: 374
Student Demographics:

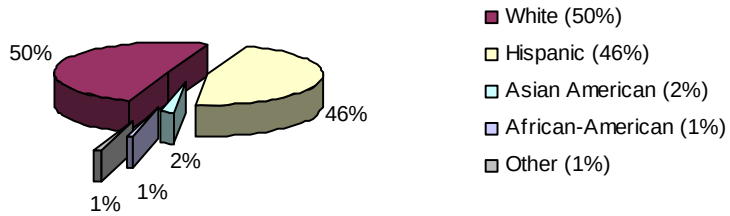
- 1% African-American not Hispanic
- 2% Asian American
- 46% Hispanic
- 50% White
- 1% Other

2005 API: 707 (up 95 points since 2001-02)
2005 AYP: Yes
Free/Reduced Lunch: 28%
English Learners: 9%

School met 6 of its 6 2005 criteria for making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

"Nearly 100 percent of Anzar's graduating class is prepared for college if that is what they elect to do," says Charlene McKowen, principal of Anzar High School in San Juan Bautista. She attributes this high level of aspirations to the benefits of a small learning community and emphasis on research and critical thinking "habits of mind." The goal is that no student receives a diploma without knowing how to think.

Anzar Demographics

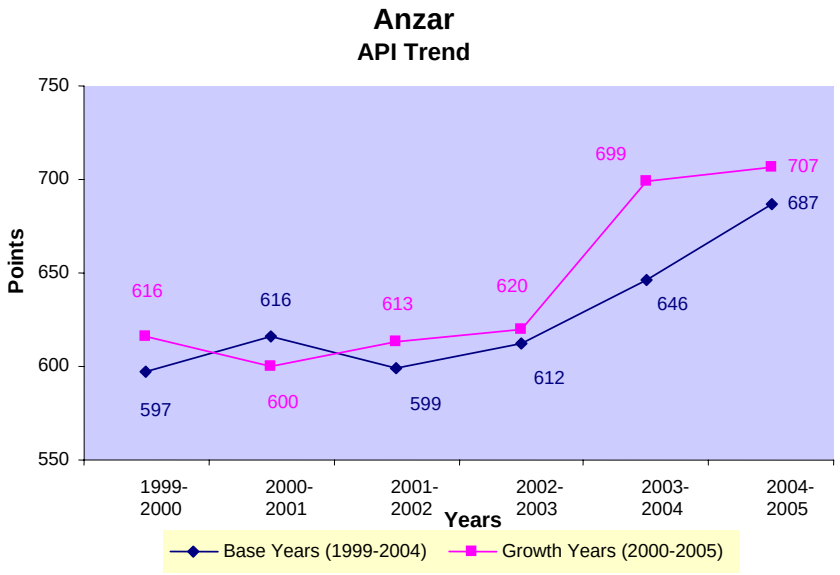


Anzar High School, a 2005 California Distinguished High School, is located in San Benito County. It is intentionally small and the only high school of a rural unified school district. Anzar was created as a small school 12 years ago. Modeled on the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, the program is student-centered. All students work closely with an adviser (20:1 ratio) for the entire time that they are at Anzar. The relationship that develops over the course of four years keeps all students from "falling through the cracks" and allows Anzar to implement two challenging programs: service-learning and graduation by exhibition.

All Anzar students work closely with an advisor during their time at the school.

Over the past three years (2002-2005), Anzar High School graduation rates have exceeded 90 percent according to the graduation rate formula, which is based on the definition from the National Center for Education Statistics. These rates surpass both county and state averages. Dropout rates for the past three years (2002-2005) average 3.7 percent for grades nine to twelve.

(continued on page 8)



Program Highlights, Challenges, and Solutions

Service-learning requires students to complete six semesters of meaningful service in an area of real need and in a capacity that allows for student initiative and leadership. The exhibitions are complex, issue-based projects that involve a written component, an oral presentation, and a question-and-answer session. Panels of trained community judges evaluate the exhibitions.

Anzar operates according to the concepts of Habits of Mind, which guide curricula. In addition, backwards planning is employed for each class. This technique places upfront the essential questions of each unit in each class on the first day of instruction. The technique helps streamline the standards-based curriculum, as all activities and lessons help achieve the end result.

Anzar is a full-inclusion school with every special education student mainstreamed and all special education teachers teaming with general education teachers, modeling **in** the classroom how best to modify curriculum.

"The school understands that people do not magically make a transition from a cooperative into a collaborative realm."

Teachers are hired by panels of students, other teachers, and parents. Anzar is a staff-led school that operates by consensus. Major decisions are made through an "equity lens" that the staff develops collaboratively each year.

General suspicion or misunderstanding of a model that differs somewhat from traditional (large) high schools has been the biggest challenge of the last decade. The tide seems to be turning, but it will probably take an entire generation before traditions fully take hold.

Constant attempts at varied forms of communication have been steadfast (e.g., newsletters, translations, parent forums, lots of student study team meetings, well-attended Individualized Educational Program meetings, and parent conferences). The school never rests on its laurels but encourages parent communication, sometimes, to the point of dangerous teacher burnout.

Advice to Other Schools

The school understands that people do not magically make a transition from a cooperative into a collaborative realm. At Anzar, even the most well-intentioned professionals cannot move from a collaborative realm into a true collegial one without understanding communication practices and varied personality styles. The school has worked hard at collaboration and revisits the issue each year during summer break.

In its early stages of development, Anzar would have appreciated assistance from schools that had undertaken a similar transformation. Because they understand the challenges facing other schools, Anzar's administrators and staff welcome the opportunity to help any school needing guidance, advice, or feedback. Though the journey has been difficult, the message is clear—it is all worth it!

Photo credit: Microsoft Office Clip Art

Information for this article was provided by Charlene McKowen, principal of Anzar High School.

Chico High School
Creating an Atmosphere of High Expectations for Student Achievement

Chico High School
Butte County
Chico Unified School District
901 The Esplanade
Chico, CA 95926
Jim Hanlon, Principal
(530) 891-3026
2005 School Profile

Community: Mid-sized city
Grade Levels: 9-12
Enrollment: 2,044
Student Demographics:

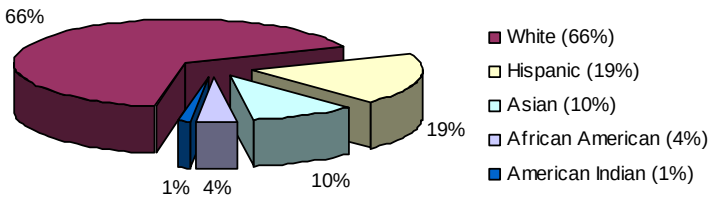
- 1% American Indian
- 10% Asian
- 19% Hispanic
- 4% African American
- 66% White

2005 API: 704 (up 36 points since 2001-02)
2005 AYP: No*
Free/Reduced Lunch: 28%
English Learners: 15%

*School met 20 of its 22 criteria for making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Seven distinct smaller learning communities (SLCs) at Chico High School offer students a chance to explore particular interests or address particular needs in more depth with a smaller group of students and teachers. Modeled on the same philosophy as cluster colleges, SLCs combine the advantages of a large high school with the personalized attention of a small one.

Chico Demographics



Some of Chico High School's SLCs have been in operation for more than ten years, and state and federal funding has allowed staff to expand existing SLCs and initiate new ones. Current SLCs include the Academy of Communications and Technology (ACT); Chico High West (West); Students Offering Unlimited Leadership (SOUL); Chico Academic Transition Services (CATS); Ag Barn (an agriculture program); Performing Arts Academy, known as "Stage"; and Medicine, Athletics/Fitness, Science, and Health (M*A*S*H).

Chico High School, a California Distinguished School and a National Blue Ribbon School, is a four-year comprehensive high school located in downtown Chico, adjacent to the California State University, Chico (CSUC) campus.

(continued on page 10)

Students enrolling in Chico High select from a variety of programs leading to graduation. The traditional program includes courses in each subject area designed to meet graduation requirements and prepare students for postsecondary options.

STAR and SAT Results
STAR Program test results for the last three years show an increase in the percentage of eleventh-grade students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels in English- Language Arts.

Year	11th Grade Students at the Proficient and Advanced Levels
2004-05	48%
2003-04	44%
2002-03	41%

(http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2005/viewreport.asp)

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores compiled by the Policy and Evaluation Division, CDE, for the last two years show a growth of 34.2 points in the average total combined verbal and mathematics scores for students. http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sp/ai/documents/sat05.xls

Over the past three years (2002-2005), Chico High School graduation rates have averaged 87 percent, which is slightly above the state average. Dropout rates for the past three years (2002-2005) have averaged 2.76 percent for grades nine to twelve.

The ACT Program
In its twelfth year of implementation, Chico High's Academy of Communications and Technology (ACT) combines the efforts of English, social science, foreign language, math, and technology instructors in an innovative, challenging academic program that stresses learning through application. ACT is recognized by the California Department of Education as a model integrated program and is a state-funded California Partnership Academy program. ACT provides students with strong academic and technical skills preparing them for college and the twenty-first century workplace.

Four-Year Student Plan
UC, CSU, Community College, or Work-Bound Students

Ninth Grade	*Tenth Grade*	*Eleventh Grade*	*Twelfth Grade*
ACT College Prep English 9	**ACT College Prep English 10**	**ACT English Twentieth-Century Literature**	**ACT English Literature of Film**
ACT World History	**Intro to Media Technology**	**ACT U.S. History (online)**	**Studio Production Technology***
ACT Computer Technology Foundation	**Spanish II**	**ACT Advanced Media Projects**	**U.S. Government/** Economics
Math	**Biology**	**Math**	Electives
Spanish I	**Math**	Spanish III or elective	
P.E.	P.E.	Chemistry or other science	

**Satisfies the University of California visual and performing arts a to g requirement.*

(continued on page 11)

Optional ACT Honors/AP Strand

Ninth Grade	*Tenth Grade*	*Eleventh Grade*	*Twelfth Grade*
ACT Honors English 9	**ACT Honors English 10**	**ACT AP English**	**ACT English Literature of Film**
ACT World History	**Intro to Media Technology**	**ACT U.S. History (online)**	**Studio Production Technology***
ACT Computer Technology Foundation	**Spanish II**	**ACT Advanced Media Projects**	**U.S. Government/** Economics
Math	**Biology**	**Math**	Electives
Spanish I	**Math**	Spanish III or elective	
P.E.	P.E.	Chemistry or other science	

**Satisfies the University of California visual and performing arts a to g requirement.*
Shaded areas represent the ACT block; all courses listed in bold are ACT block or sequenced classes.

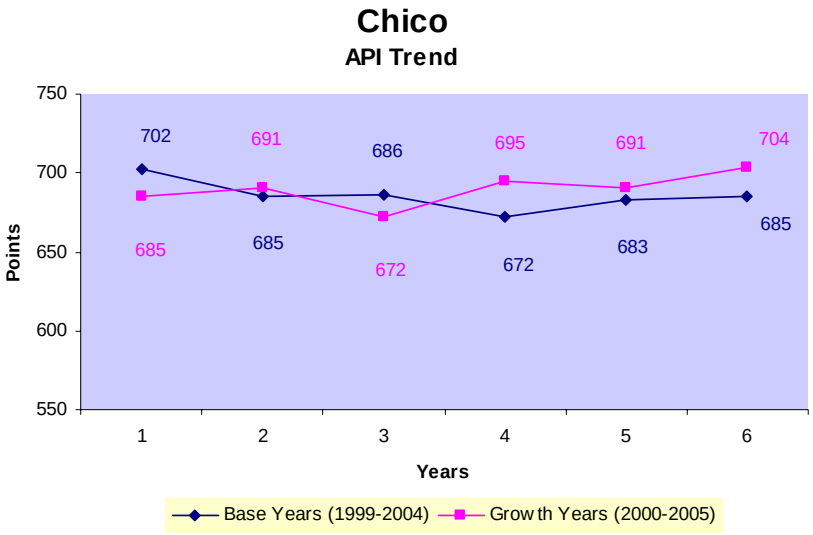
- The ACT program for ninth graders offers English, World History, and Computer Technology Foundations in a three-hour block. Student schedules are modified each week to provide blocks of time for in-depth extended instruction and activities. ACT freshmen work in a "family" atmosphere, participating in an integrated curriculum designed to bring relevance to their learning. ACT freshmen also learn to teach as they train visiting fifth and sixth graders in the creation of computer presentations and audio/video projects. An integrated honors English option is also offered to ACT freshmen.
- ACT sophomores enroll in a two-hour block including English and Introduction to Media Technology. This block is designed to give students the opportunity to use and enhance their powerful presentation and media production skills. With innovative projects that stretch their creativity, students learn to effectively express themselves through writing, speaking, and the use of technology. ACT sophomores also investigate various media-related career options, such as computer animation, video production, and studio recording technology. The block scheduling structure provides flexible scheduling for in-depth studies in all ACT classes.
- The ACT junior program consists of classes in Twentieth Century Literature, Advanced Media Technology, and U.S. History (online) classes in a new innovative block structure that increases elective options for students. Students continue an academic focus while applying and enhancing print, audio, and video production skills. ACT juniors are also given the option to enroll in eleventh-grade Advanced Placement (AP) English. ACT juniors participate in simulation and service-learning projects that help students see the impact they can make on their community and the future.
- ACT seniors enroll in Literature of Film and Studio Production Technology; they study the conventions of various film genres and incorporate them into major video projects. Each year ACT seniors travel to Los Angeles to visit major film and sound studios to explore future occupational opportunities.

"They (students) have a safe place inside the larger high school with an extra support system, and this sense of closeness has a huge impact on academic success . . . ."

(continued on page 12)

Program Highlights, Challenges, and Solutions

According to Christine Persson, ACT coordinator, what is special and unique to the program is that students develop a sense of family, get to know one another, and understand that teachers talk to each other regularly about them. They have a safe place inside the larger high school with an extra support system, and this sense of closeness has a huge impact on academic success and provides struggling students with built-in formal and informal strategies to help them. This environment makes students keenly aware of high academic expectations and enables them to work with others.



An advantage of pure block scheduling at each grade level is the high degree of flexibility teachers have to work with the same students. Schedules are curriculum-driven, which allows blocking two or three hours to work on a project. Library research can extend beyond a 45-minute period, or an integrated history-English-technology project can be conducted in a technology class. Students can visit the local museum or displays at the university without being required to be excused from classes. Students can also participate in service-learning projects both on and off campus.

At each grade level technology is infused and integrated into the curriculum. The professional portfolio is completed by all students in grades nine through twelve.

ACT standards drive the program. Two of the six standards address personal and interpersonal skills, which are critical in postsecondary choices and careers. Students learn to express themselves in writing reflections on the work contained in their portfolios. They develop their skills at all grade levels.

For the past eight years, an ACT team of students has been presenting the program's best practices of integrating technology into the curriculum at state and national conferences. These students choose to make this commitment as a part of their extracurricular activities.

New and veteran teachers involved in the program are motivated, maintain a connection with each other, and are focused on students' success.

In the planning and implementation of the program, problems arose with scheduling related to "pure blocks," but these were resolved by the registrar, who was able to custom-design student schedules.

Early on there was resistance from some staff members. Therefore the staff and administration need to communicate on a regular basis. Now, before a new teacher is invited into the program, the department chair is first consulted. Academic department chairs emphasize that core subjects and other required courses are taught within the ACT program.

(continued on page 13)

One of the “little details” that can become a problem is accurate attendance. Because classes are reconfigured three or four times a year, a student’s actual schedule can be different from the normal school schedule posted on the school computer. Therefore, knowing where students are and accurately reporting attendance are critical details.

Advice to Other Schools

For those schools wishing to convert to smaller learning communities, Ms. Persson has the following advice:

The ACT program integrates media and computer technology throughout the curriculum.

- “It is important to figure out how to do things right. As ACT coordinator, I stress the important ‘school details’ to our ACT staff. It takes time to do things right when you are a new program and especially one that is in much demand. Communication is paramount.
- “Visit those who have done it and are still working on it, then design a program that works at your site with the adults (teachers, administrators, counselors, school board, classified support staff, parents) and students at that site. There is no manual; believe me. I have spent years looking for it.
- “Do not take on more than you can do successfully. Start small if you must. Resist representing the program to parents and students as something that it is not.
- “Find people you can work with. Hash out your different philosophies. Commit to common ground, curriculum, and—most importantly—to the program, even if it means compromising something personally such as moving or sharing your classroom, not doing your favorite assignment, learning something new, or taking a risk. Remember that the program is always evolving; the ACT program at Chico High School is nothing like what we originally planned. If someone working with you is not comfortable with the experience, allow that person to leave. You do need leaders for various tasks and responsibilities but make a commitment to shared decision making. Believe that when you go into a meeting with no idea how to solve a particular problem, the solution may come—even six hours into the meeting—from the person you least expected to have it.
- “Honor personal and family time. This is a really big commitment. Be sure that your team members do not feel guilty. Everyone contributes what they can. Support each other, and accept each other’s choices and limitations. This is so, so important.”

Photo credit: Microsoft Clip Art.

Technology as a Tool to Save Time, Promote Professional Development, and Build Community

The California Department of Education (CDE) has funded four Statewide Education Technology Services (SETS) to provide information and resources free of charge to California's teachers, administrators, and school technical professionals. One of these services, designed for California administrators, is the Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL). TICAL offers focused, relevant resources that support technology integration to improve teaching and learning, timely information, and electronic forums that invite targeted discussions from the education community.

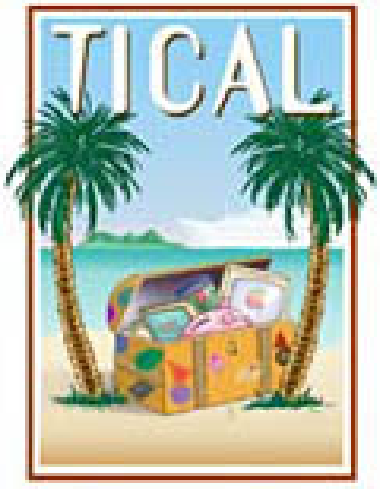
Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL)
"TICAL is one of the best sites on the Web," insists Gene Arnold, director of Technology, for Siskiyou County Office of Education. "I use it all the time as a source of content for professional development that our office provides to our teachers and administrators. The time saved is used to assist teachers and administrators in using technology as a tool to teach standards to students."

Arnold shared that TICAL's classroom observation tool for handheld devices was featured at the Siskiyou County Office of Education's Superintendents' Leadership Academy. The presentation has led to more focused classroom observations by administrators and has also generated classroom observation tool use among teachers, who see the benefit of collaboration to support student achievement. "The site's Breeze and PowerPoint presentations are especially useful for demonstrating how to integrate technology into the curriculum," said Arnold. "Students benefit when administrators know what effective curriculum/ technology integration looks like and how it can be used to support teaching and learning. Administrators are the ones that make technology happen for schools."

Professional development is conducted through a series of workshops provided by TICAL cadre members throughout the state as well as through online presentations and discussion groups on the project's Web site. TICAL also maintains a Web portal that features hundreds of resources that have been reviewed and recommended by practicing administrators to assist with digital school leadership. The Web portal is frequently augmented with current content that provides just-in-time assistance for administrators.

TICAL is funded through the CDE and administered through the Santa Cruz County Office of Education. The service provides electronic resources focused on digital school leadership for education administrators in the areas of:

- Data-driven decision making
- Integrating technology into standards-based curriculum
- Technology planning
- Professional development needs of staff
- Financial planning for technology
- Operations and maintenance.



In April 2004, as part of the evaluation process for TICAL, administrators such as Arnold were surveyed through an online format. The purpose of the survey was to determine how TICAL assisted administrators in their work and how it benefited their schools and districts. Results indicated that TICAL was very useful and assisted administrators most by saving them time, linking them to high-quality technology resources, and helping with technology planning. In addition, administrators use the site for professional development, data-driven decision making, and personal productivity.

(continued on page 15)

Data gathered for the evaluation report indicated approximately 7,000 unique TICAL users. TICAL users indicated that the site saved them, on average, 15 to 30 minutes per month. Some users report time savings of 60 minutes or more per month. Based on an average California administrator salary of $50 per hour, the savings in time generated from using the TICAL site would be more than $200,000 per month or over $2 million per year. The time saved can be dedicated to working with the schools and districts to raise student achievement.

The project's value and ease of scalability has already allowed for successful implementation in Arkansas, with other states currently showing an interest in incorporating the project for their administrators. The relevance of the administrator-reviewed and selected resources on the portal, the ease of navigation, and the access to pertinent content, such as the Enhancing Education through Technology and No Child Left Behind information, have been especially useful.

Education technology is a powerful tool that can be used to motivate and engage students in the learning process. Effective professional development, especially for site and district administrators, can help ensure that technology integration is systemically embedded in the learning environment to make a positive impact on teaching and learning and close the achievement gap for students. Administrative leadership and support to ensure that technology is available and effectively utilized is crucial to successful, sustained implementation.

TICAL was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an example of a leadership success story. More information on TICAL may be obtained by contacting the project director, Michael Simkins, at (831) 477-5501, or by e-mail at mailto:msimkins@portical.org.

References

U.S. Department of Education. 2004. National Education Technology Plan: *Toward a New Golden Age in American Education.*

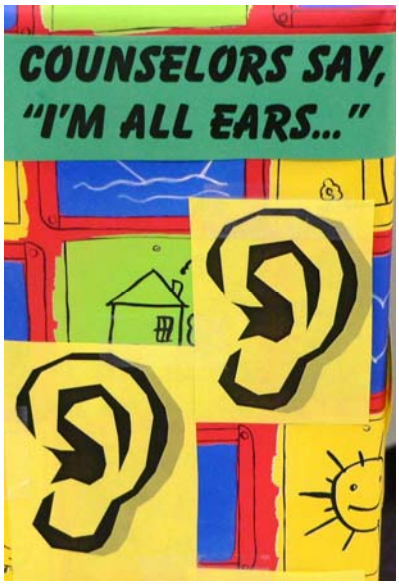
Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL) Annual Report, prepared by the Center for Educational Planning, Santa Clara County Office of Education, San Jose (2004).

By Joyce Hinkson

Joyce Hinkson is an Education Programs Consultant with the Middle and High School Improvement Office, California Department of Education. She can be reached at (916) 319-0549 or by e-mail at JHinkson@cde.ca.gov*.*

School Counseling: Improving the Lives of California Youths in the Twenty-First Century

To meet the growing demand for outcome-based programs, the California Department of Education (CDE) is updating its previous school counseling guidelines by creating the *California Results-Based School Counseling and Student Support Guidelines*. The anticipated completion of the guidelines is fall 2006.



One of the important goals of the CDE in publishing the *California Results-Based School Counseling and Student Support Guidelines* is to create a quality document that represents the academic, career, and personal/social needs of students. The guidelines will provide direction and assistance to counselors, students, professionals, parents, teachers, and members of the community throughout California.

High stakes testing and greater demands on schools and students to demonstrate results make clear the need for counselors to demonstrate accountability as part of their professional responsibility. These guidelines reflect a paradigm shift from a traditional service-oriented counseling approach to a program-oriented counseling approach that is preventive in nature, developmental in design, student-centered, and results-based.

The *California Results-Based School Counseling and Student Support Guidelines* promote building a structured program in which all students receive planned guidance, curriculum that brings together skills for learning (academic), skills for earning (career), and skills for living (personal/social) for all students as well as intentional guidance for those students who need greater assistance. The guidelines serve as a road map to develop a quality school counseling program that is based on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model.

Counseling Within Smaller Learning Communities

As described in ASCA's *National Model: A Framework for School Counseling*, the professional school counselor's role in smaller learning communities is to support data-driven programs that "are built on standards in academic, career and personal/social development."

The new three R's of smaller learning communities—rigor, relevance, and relationships—are integrated within the comprehensive school counseling program in the following manner:

a) Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial postsecondary options, including college.
b) Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work.
c) Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect themselves and others.

Counselors play a pivotal role in providing programs and services that lead to student success. The benefit of a transformational school counseling and student support approach is that it

(continued on page 17)

streamlines the implementation process, which creates a data-driven accountability system, and demonstrates counselor effectiveness. It promotes equity and access for all students and suggests to counselors ways to establish partnerships with administrators and utilize data to drive decision making and create program improvement. Counselors can use these guidelines to strengthen existing programs or create a foundation for developing new counseling programs. In this way, counselors can partner with other educational leaders working to design and develop innovative programs to improve student achievement and to provide a system of delivery that will maximize support of the mission of schools and districts statewide.

"High stakes testing and greater demands on schools and students to demonstrate results make clear the need for counselors to demonstrate accountability as part of their professional responsibility."

Photo credit: CDE, Middle & High School Improvement Office; photo taken at Toby Johnson Middle School.

By George Montgomery

George Montgomery is an Education Programs Consultant with the California Department of Education's Counseling, Student Support, and Service-Learning Office. He can be reached at (916) 319-0540 or by e-mail at GMontgomery@cde.ca.gov. *For more information on counseling and student support resources available from CDE, visit* mailto:http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg.

Worth a Click

The following Web sites provide additional information on smaller learning communities.

California Department of Education
2005 Distinguished High Schools
Features California's 2005 Distinguished High Schools that have smaller learning communities to improve teaching and learning.

Coalition of Essential Schools
Provides resources for learning more about smaller learning community structures and strategies.

National League of State Legislatures
Presents a summary of research results for small learning communities.

(continued on page 18)

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)
Small Learning Communities
Highlights the NWREL's Small Learning Communities Web site, a resource for implementing smaller learning communities using the framework outlined in *Small Learning Communities: Implementing and Deepening Practice*.

The Principal's Partnership
Features a research brief on small learning communities sponsored by Union Pacific Foundation.

School Redesign Network at Stanford University
Provides information about school design, teaching and learning, curriculum, and assessment.

Small Schools Project
Offers resources for teachers, principals, administrators, parents, and community members who are part of a small school.

Unite L.A.
Small Learning Communities - Small Schools
Facilitates education and workforce development programs and serves the Los Angeles Unified School District with school-to-career, small schools, and small learning community resources.

U.S. Department of Education
Provides information from the federal government regarding structures and strategies for creating smaller learning communities.

What Kids Can Do
Features books, curricula, and research about learning and achievement, including information on small schools and small learning communities.

The following portions of the CDE Web site provide additional information on events, funding, and resources of interest to the education community.

CDE Conference Calendar
Identifies state and national education conferences and workshops of interest to educators, parents, and students.

Funding: CDE Administered
Features CDE funding by fiscal year, type, status, topic, keyword(s), or any combination.

(continued on page 19)

Funding: Outside the CDE
Highlights state, federal, and other funding opportunities administered by agencies outside the CDE.

Virtual Library
Showcases a collection of resources especially for districts with high-priority schools.

Join the High School E-mail List

Join the CDE High School listserv at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hsmail.asp to receive notices about high school related information and upcoming *High School!* periodical issues.

To view current and past *High School!* periodical issues visit: http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/hischlnwsltr.asp.

Please send your comments or suggestions to HiNet@cde.ca.gov. Your ideas and suggestions are welcome.

HIGH SCHOOL!

Middle and High School Improvement Office
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 4401
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 322-1892
Fax: (916) 322-3390
http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/hischlnwsltr.asp

Rozlynn Worrall, Manager
Christopher Dowell, Editor
Dinorah Hall, Layout/Design